Ethnic diversity is good for your health, reveal researchers

May 30 2013

A study by social scientists at The University of Manchester has revealed that Britain's most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods are also the healthiest.

According to the team at the University's Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), diversity is associated with higher social cohesion and a greater tolerance of each other's differences.

Someone from an ethnic minority is less likely to report racial discrimination in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood, when compared to living in less diverse areas they also reveal.

Rather than diversity, the team show that it is a neighbourhood's high level of deprivation which is associated with poor physical and mental health, low social cohesion and race discrimination.

In turn, they say, race discrimination leads to poorer mental health, high blood pressure, increased smoking, and lower self-esteem.

Ethnic diversity is beneficial , they argue, because it is associated with less racism and discrimination, more social cohesion, and stronger social support networks.

The findings, based on analysis of census and survey data, are to be presented to a conference for University of Manchester researchers, policy makers, and community organisations tomorrow (31 May).

Professor James Nazroo, Director of CoDE, said: "Our research and this conference is all about setting the record straight on those diverse [neighbourhoods](#) which are so widely stigmatised.

"So often we read in our newspapers and hear from our politicians that immigration and ethnic diversity adversely affect a neighbourhood. But careful research shows this to be wrong.

"In fact, the level of deprivation, not diversity, is the key factor that determines these quality of [life factors](#) for people in neighbourhoods.

"So our research demonstrates the disadvantages of living in deprived areas, but the positives of living in ethnically diverse areas.

"It's deprivation which affects those Caribbean, Black African, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi people who are disproportionately represented in these neighbourhoods, as well as those white people who live alongside them."

Also according to the researchers, one-in-five people (20%) identified with an ethnic group other than White British in 2011 compared with 13% in 2001.

The ethnic minority populations of England and Wales live in more mixed areas in 2011, and this mixing has accelerated over the past ten years.

Traditional clusters of ethnic minority groups have grown, but the rate of minority population growth is greatest outside these clusters. Ethnic diversity is spreading throughout the country.

Dr Nissa Finney said: "Despite the clustering of ethnic minority people in some areas, the vast majority of [ethnic minority](#) people have a strong

sense of belonging to Britain, feel part of Britain, and feel that Britishness is compatible with other cultural or religious identities."

The team today publish a briefing which urges policy makers to prioritise tackling the concentration of poverty in terms of people and places, allowing the benefits of neighbourhood ethnic diversity to be more widely felt.

Dr Laia Becares said: "Increased diversity is beneficial for all ethnic groups so we say the policy agenda should develop strategies for inclusiveness rather than marginalising minority identities, religions and cultures.

"Policies aimed at reducing the stigmatisation of diverse neighbourhoods and promoting positive representations can only be a good thing."

More information: www.ethnicity.ac.uk/

Provided by University of Manchester

Citation: Ethnic diversity is good for your health, reveal researchers (2013, May 30) retrieved 19 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2013-05-ethnic-diversity-good-health-reveal.html